

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:732
ANSWERED ON:25.02.2009
ISSUE OF PASSPORTS TO HAJ PILGRIMS
Kharventhan Shri Salarapatty Kuppusamy

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Saudi Arabia has asked India to issue passports to the Haj pilgrims instead of Issuing `Special Passes`;
- (b) If so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor;and
- (c) the efforts / steps proposed to be taken by the Government to provide passport and other logistic facilities to the poor people in the rural areas, who wish to go for Haj pilgrimage?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a)& (b) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has informed all the countries,including India, that from the year 2009 Haj pilgrims should travel with international passports;and

(c) Passport Offices will facilitate issuance of passports to Haj pilgrims by opening special counters during the Haj season.Issue of passports under the Tatkal scheme will be available to Haj pilgrims. In addition,the Government has issued instructions to all Passport Offices to ensure availability of passport booklets to meet the additional demand during the Haj season.

However, the Government intends to approach to Saudi Authorities for a reconsideration of our request and allow the existing system to continue for one more year.